## Action Committee on the Rural Economy

# *Certainty for Rural Saskatchewan*

## Report of the Infrastructure Subcommittee

March 2005

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE) process, the availability of infrastructure and its impact on economic development in rural Saskatchewan has been an ongoing concern. In response, ACRE established the Infrastructure Subcommittee in the summer of 2003 to develop broad policy recommendations on how infrastructure resources can most efficiently and effectively encourage and support economic development in the area of Saskatchewan south of the northern forest region, excluding the cities of Regina and Saskatoon.

The Infrastructure Subcommittee set out to seek the most appropriate approach to providing infrastructure to rural Saskatchewan. Its mandate was to make recommendations for provincial government consideration as they relate to the development of policies that will maximize the economic development opportunities in rural Saskatchewan and strengthen the rural economy and its contribution to the provincial economy.

Any approach to infrastructure has to face the reality that rural Saskatchewan is a large geographic area with a relatively small population. Rural Saskatchewan's low population density has often meant there is no business or economic case, from an infrastructure provider's perspective, to justify infrastructure. In a sense, providing infrastructure to rural Saskatchewan has been both a social policy and an economic one. This means that Saskatchewan has traditionally used the equity approach to infrastructure development, giving everyone more or less equal access to basic infrastructure at a level that is feasible for the location.

The alternative is a more targeted approach, where resources are provided to areas where they are most needed and most beneficial, accomplished through support of existing and potential clusters and corridors of economic and social activity.

There is a need for certainty in rural Saskatchewan with respect to both the future of communities and the long-term presence of infrastructure and services. Certainty will support investment decisions, enhance business start-ups and encourage professionals and retirees to locate to rural Saskatchewan. Without this certainty, investment dollars, families looking for employment opportunities and retirees seeking assurance of health services will continue to flow to a handful of the larger cities in Saskatchewan, as has happened over the last 50 years.

## II STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND RESEARCH

To examine both the equity and targeted approaches, the subcommittee met with stakeholders who were either infrastructure providers, had an impact on infrastructure decisions, or were strongly affected by infrastructure policy. The list of stakeholders can be found in Appendix A. The subcommittee felt it was important not only to meet with the traditional infrastructure stakeholders, such as crown corporations and the government departments providing hard infrastructure, but also with stakeholders who provide social infrastructure, such as the educational and health authorities and arts and tourism communities and organizations. The subcommittee believes that social infrastructure plays an important but unsung role in economic development.

The subcommittee also met with a number of community leaders (Appendix A) who use a regional approach to municipal infrastructure development. Community-based groups that are co-operating on regional infrastructure projects gave the subcommittee valuable insight into the potential of a regional approach to infrastructure provision.

The subcommittee participated in six public consultations meetings in December 2004 and January 2005. The subcommittee met with 13 participants who had attended various consultation meetings, at a roundtable discussion in February 2005. The purpose of the meeting was to further explore ideas on how to provide infrastructure to rural Saskatchewan. The list of the participants is included in Appendix A.

The subcommittee was represented at meetings with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) board of directors, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) board of directors, a meeting of municipalities in Langenburg, the SUMA annual conference and a meeting of the West Central Governance Group. As well, the subcommittee members were involved in numerous private discussions and media interviews regarding the report throughout November and December 2004, and January 2005.

The subcommittee undertook an extensive literature review on recent developments in rural economic development policy and the role that infrastructure plays in this development. The research focused on Canadian and American rural infrastructure policy.

## III LEVELS OF INFRASTRUCTURE

For the purposes of the subcommittee's work, infrastructure includes both economic and social infrastructure (sometimes referred to as hard and soft infrastructure). Economic or hard infrastructure includes transportation, landfills, water, sewage, natural gas, power and telecommunications. In the subcommittee's work, social or soft infrastructure includes the bricks and mortar components of health care, education and recreation, without which these services cannot be provided.

Within these parameters, the subcommittee further classified infrastructure into three levels, based on location and funding requirements.

1. First Level

   The first level of infrastructure relates to local infrastructure such as streets in communities and roads in rural municipalities. At this level, decision-making power and the impact of those decisions are very local in nature. Funding for this infrastructure generally comes from local taxes and provincial general-purpose revenue sharing grants. This report does not address this level, since these are local spending decisions reflecting local priorities, and outside the mandate of the subcommittee.

2. Second Level

   The second level of infrastructure includes infrastructure that is local in nature, but which may have a regional component where a number of communities can share the infrastructure. Water, sewage treatment and landfills are examples of this type of infrastructure. Another feature of infrastructure at this level is that provincial and/or federal grants (through various infrastructure programs) is often a major portion of the total funding.

3. Third Level

   The third level of infrastructure is infrastructure that is more provincial in nature and is either provided by provincial departments or crown utilities, or the province provides a major portion of funding and/or has decision making power. Examples of this type of infrastructure include hospitals and health care facilities, education facilities, provincial highways and utilities.

## IV CAVEATS TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE REPORT

During the public consultation process, there were many comments regarding the subcommittee's initial draft report, especially around the concern that infrastructure was going to be removed from places that were not regional centres or that non-regional centres were no longer going to receive any infrastructure funding. Although these concerns were addressed in the initial draft report, it appears the report did not clearly convey this to many readers. Therefore, the subcommittee wishes to clearly articulate the various caveats to the report.

1. Current Infrastructure

   There is no intention that any infrastructure currently in place should be removed. The continuation of existing infrastructure will largely depend on future population levels and on various social and economic factors that may be in place at the time expansion or renewal decisions are made.

2. Essential Services

   Essential existing infrastructure such as water, sewage treatment, basic power, telephone and natural gas are to be maintained. In the future, provision of some of these services (water, sewage treatment and landfills) may be more suitably done at the regional level than at the community level.

3. Municipal Revenue Sharing Grants

   Currently the province provides various grants to urban and rural municipalities (collectively called revenue sharing grants) that may be used for infrastructure. The subcommittee did not review this issue and therefore this report is not intended to address it, nor does it imply that changes should be made to this program as it pertains to infrastructure.

4. Culture, Sport and Recreational Grants

   Currently communities are eligible for culture, sport and recreational grants. The revenues for this grant program are primarily derived from the lotteries. The subcommittee supports the current grant process for culture, sports and recreation.

5. Need for Flexibility

   Infrastructure providers need to continue to have flexibility to provide infrastructure for major economic development projects occurring throughout rural Saskatchewan, including, but not limited to, mining, oil and gas development, forestry, First Nations developments, crop processing, intensive livestock operations and tourism projects. The infrastructure providers have shown flexibility in providing infrastructure to these types of projects, on mostly a business-case basis, and this report should not be

seen as infringing upon this flexibility. In fact, the subcommittee has recognized and continues to recognize that these types of developments provide major opportunities for economic development and jobs in rural Saskatchewan.

6. Municipal Governance

Strong concerns were expressed during the public consultation meetings that a more targeted approach allocating infrastructure to specific centres is the first step in forcing the amalgamation of municipalities. The subcommittee has no position on this issue because local municipal governance is not and was not part of the subcommittee's mandate.

## V THE REGIONAL CENTRE APPROACH TO INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION AND SELF-DEFINED REGIONS

In the infrastructure subcommittee's Draft Report of November 2004, it was recommended that the government adopt a strategy to support infrastructure in a defined number of regional centres. From the consultation process in December 2004 and January 2005, as well as other meetings, it is clear that this proposal is not acceptable to many in rural Saskatchewan, including local government officials who provided most of the input since the release of the draft report. Therefore, the subcommittee will not be recommending that the province adopt a strategy to support infrastructure in a defined number of regional centres.

That being said, the subcommittee's initial concept of ensuring that infrastructure exists in regional centres in order to provide certainty for rural Saskatchewan, continues to have merit. Regional centres can achieve a critical mass of population, services and infrastructure to enhance economic development for the entire surrounding region. If regional centres do well, other communities in the region will benefit through stable population and the availability of jobs and services within the region. But clearly, further discussion and consideration is required to reach consensus on how this can best be achieved.

The subcommittee notes that the location and consolidation of infrastructure and other services in larger regional communities is already happening, both in the public and private sectors, and that this trend is, in fact, providing support for smaller communities in the region.

### *A Positive Approach to Infrastructure Development*

The subcommittee believes the regional centre approach is a positive approach to infrastructure development in rural areas and will help overcome three major trends that are hurting economic development in rural Saskatchewan. They are:

- The lack of certainty in the provision of infrastructure;
- The 50-year trend of declining rural population; and,
- The location and level of services.

The following discussion analyzes these three trends.

1. <u>The lack of certainty in the provision of infrastructure</u>

Fiscal pressures, deregulation and the slow but continuing decline in rural population and economic activity is creating uncertainty about the future of infrastructure in rural areas. The lack of certainty hampers private investment in rural Saskatchewan, because investors are unsure whether the infrastructure that is necessary for economic and social development will be there for the long term. Private investors require assurance that their investments are safe and they will earn a return on their investment

into the future. The lack of certainty about infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan leads to investment in the major cities, where there is greater likelihood that the necessary infrastructure will be in place to enhance economic and social activity. An observation from Ken Hamilton, a resident of Assiniboia, sums up what the lack of certainty is doing to the potential of his community:

> *"Historically, Assiniboia has been the regional centre for south central Saskatchewan. Many people from the surrounding farms and smaller centres who were planning to retire traditionally chose Assiniboia as the place to retire to, when the time came. Many people are now choosing to retire into Moose Jaw as they are concerned about the future operation of health care facilities in Assiniboia. They know that if they retire into Moose Jaw there will be health care facilities available for as long as they need them. However, in their mind, there is no such guarantee in Assiniboia. Towns like Assiniboia need to know, with some certainty, what facilities are going to be available into the future. Uncertainty leads to a loss of people and unwillingness for entrepreneurs to make business investments."*

2. The 50-year trend of declining rural population

The decline in the rural population and the consolidation of economic development and population growth in the province's largest centres has been an ongoing trend for more than 50 years. While the majority of rural communities have declined significantly over the last 50 years, a number of larger communities have been able to maintain their population and a significant number of services, thereby becoming larger service centres.

Until now these service centres have had sufficient labour supply, services and amenities necessary to keep and attract businesses and people. However, many of these centres have not developed into strong regional centres where there is a critical mass of population and services. As a result, growth and development have largely gravitated to Regina, Saskatoon and a handful of larger cities.

3. The location and level of services

A sufficient population and income within a community and surrounding area is needed for firms in the service industry to be profitable.[1] This concept is known as demand thresholds. The size of population and the income levels necessary to meet the needs of a service business will differ depending upon the type of service being provided. For instance, the size of population and income necessary to support a gas station or restaurant is relatively small, whereas the size of the population and income levels necessary to support a furniture store are significantly higher. The number of establishments offering this service will increase as an area's population increases.

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[1] Businesses which produce products for consumption outside the region are not dependent upon the region's population or income to sustain their businesses.

The demand thresholds and the size of communities within a region will determine what levels of services are available. If a region has no large regional centre with a significant population, then the region as a whole is unlikely to have the same level of services as a region with a large centre.[2] It is also likely that residents in a region with no strong centre will by-pass all of the communities within the region and conduct the majority of their business in the closest large city where all their service needs can be met in one place. In effect, the closest large city becomes the regional centre even though the city may be outside the region. The impact, on a region with no regional centre, will likely be the loss of remaining services as they are unable to compete with the large city.

Critical to this discussion is the impact of attracting individuals to a region where there are few services, and where the choice within a service group is small, i.e., there is only one restaurant vs. a choice among five restaurants. Keeping people, and attracting people to live in a community not only depends on employment opportunities, but also on the quality-of-life that is offered. The number and choice of services within a community or region are part of that quality-of-life issue. Regions or communities that can't offer quality-of-life attributes such as services will have a more difficult time attracting and keeping people. Within this context, it is important to note that people's definitions of "quality of life" vary greatly, and that rural Saskatchewan does attract those who seek to escape from so-called city amenities. However, that is a niche group that in itself is not sufficiently large enough to support the economy of rural Saskatchewan.

***The Current Reality of Infrastructure Development***

The concept of supporting infrastructure in a defined number of regional centres, at first glance, seems like a radical concept given the history of infrastructure provision in the province. When the subcommittee started its work in 2003, there was a general impression that equity considerations still played an important role in infrastructure decision making. However, meetings with various stakeholders made it clear that the equity model is not as strong as it once was in determining infrastructure.

Because of increased competition brought about by deregulation and business considerations, the crown utilities have moved to a commercial/business case or user pay model in determining where to provide infrastructure. By moving to a user pay system, the crown utilities, by default, are providing utility infrastructure on a cluster-based approach. Infrastructure in a cluster or corridor will be cheaper than outside it.[3] This will encourage businesses to locate where the infrastructure is the cheapest. For example, if a firm is to locate in a rural area, the potential cost of obtaining a second phone line is very high ($10,000). However if this firm was located in an urban setting (town or city) the cost is significantly cheaper, at less than $500.

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[2] A region with a large regional centre will have the population within the centre itself and surrounding area, i.e., critical mass, to develop a large network of services.

[3] All of the Crown Utilities indicated that they have no policy of encouraging customers to locate in clusters despite the cheaper costs to provide infrastructure to a cluster. They are willing to provide infrastructure where there is customer demand as long as the customer is willing to pay for it.

The extension of Community Net to smaller centres is an example of where the equity model continues to resonate. From SaskTel's perspective, there is no business case to provide high speed Internet to some of these communities. However, with federal and provincial financial assistance, these communities have been connected to high speed Internet.

With respect to health and educational facilities, fiscal limitations means that the Departments of Health and Learning have established criteria that lead to facilities being located in larger centres or clusters. For example, the province will only fund health care facilities where there are three to five (preferably five) doctors on staff. This means that health care facilities are only being built in towns of 3,000+ people with a trading area of 7,000 to 8,000 people. With respect to funding for school construction, it is unlikely the province will provide funding for a school with less than 250 to 300 students and will not fund any new construction when utilization of current facilities is below 110 per cent.

Although the Department of Highways & Transportation is doing some work that could be classified as providing roads on a cluster or corridor basis,[4] the concept of equity is probably the strongest for this department of government, due to people's expectations about the provision of roads and the political considerations related to roads and highways.

The current Canada Saskatchewan Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (CSMRIF) is moving away from the equity approach by requiring applicants to complete a long term sustainability schedule. The intent of the schedule is to ensure that communities have the financial means to maintain their infrastructure over the long term. The underlying intent is that money will not be provided for infrastructure to communities that are not sustainable over the long term.

The trend towards strengthened infrastructure in larger regional centres is very evident in the private service sector, as witnessed by the shopping patterns of rural residents who by-pass their local community and shop at a regional centre or large city.

While this leads to the demise of certain types of businesses in smaller communities, a stronger nearby centre, in other instances, provides support for those communities. For example, in the co-op and credit union systems, stand-alone small community operations are merging with larger operations located in larger regional centres. The small stand-alone operation is typically no longer seen as viable, but it survives and remains in operation as a branch of the larger organization. Without this type of merger, many small communities may no longer have a credit union or co-op store—they would have gone the way of the chartered banks, which have largely abandoned rural Saskatchewan.

Private law firms, accounting firms and others providing professional services, located in larger regional centres, often provide their services for one or two days a week in smaller

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[4] Under the current Prairie Grains Road Program (PRGP) a significant amount of the money is going to strategic regional highways. In contrast, under the Canadian Agri Infrastructure Program (CAIP) a portion of the money ($10M) in the first year of the program was distributed to all rural municipalities.

communities where there is no business case to provide these services on a full time basis. Without a large centre within the region it is unlikely that these communities will have these services.

***Self-defined Regions***

During the consultation meetings, an alternative to the regional centre framework was suggested as a way of providing infrastructure to rural areas. Under this concept, local communities and governments will set up voluntary regional municipal partnerships to plan and decide on the need for, and location of infrastructure. There would be no fixed boundaries for these partnership arrangements; the boundaries would vary, depending on the nature of the infrastructure and project. Once the region for a specific project is defined, it would be the region, in consultation with the infrastructure provider, that would be responsible for deciding where to locate infrastructure within the region. This concept has been referred to as self-defined municipal partnerships, or self-defined regions.

The subcommittee views self-defined regions as an option that requires considerable further public discussion and consideration. This discussion needs to examine the advantages and address questions and concerns that have been associated with this approach.

Advantages

The major advantage of this alternative is that local people, with first hand knowledge of the area and the needs of the region, will be making the decisions about where it makes the most sense to locate the infrastructure.

In conjunction with this is a sense of empowerment felt by local people who will be making major decisions on issues that affect them directly, rather than having these decisions made by provincial politicians and/or bureaucrats who do not live within the communities directly affected. An argument could be made that decision making would be faster, compared to decision making at the provincial level.

Questions and Concerns

Since the self-defined regions will be voluntary, the question arises as to what happens if one or several local municipalities within the region refuse to join the self-defined region. This is especially a concern if the municipality is a large urban centre and the infrastructure is of major importance to the region. What happens if a local municipality that is presently part of a region quits the region because it disagrees with a decision? How can the region deal with these possibilities, so that the process can survive?

Who decides what constitutes a region for making a decision on infrastructure? Would minimum standards or criteria be required before a self-defined region can be seen as a viable region for that type of infrastructure project?

While some infrastructure decisions within a self-defined region are likely to be common sense based and not controversial, other decisions, such as the location of a hospital or school within a region, may be very controversial. How will the self-defined region be able to make these difficult and potentially controversial decisions and not only live with the consequences, but survive as a region to make further decisions on other infrastructure needs?

It is likely that under the self-defined region framework, infrastructure will be spread out among a number of communities in a region rather than located in one place.[5] For example, it is possible that a hospital will be located in one community and the regional college in another. If infrastructure is spread out over several communities, it is more difficult to achieve a critical mass and population in one community and to develop a strong complement of services in one location. Thus, is there the possibility that people within the region will bypass all the communities and go to a large city where they can obtain all of their services in one place?

In a large centre there are more employment opportunities available compared to smaller centres. Will allocating infrastructure among a number of communities hinder the ability to attract two income families to locate in the region? Will professional couples, who are becoming the mainstay of rural healthcare, education, and other professions, choose to locate in a region if they have to work in separate communities?

The subcommittee remains convinced that creating certainty about the availability of infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan continues to be a key factor assisting economic development in the rural areas. The concept of self-defined voluntary partnerships will need to be examined to determine if it will create the necessary certainty that will encourage the private sector to invest in rural Saskatchewan.

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[5] One of the underlying themes of the self-defined concept was the ability of the local region to spread infrastructure over the region rather having it concentrated in one location.

## VI RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the subcommittee are based on the premise that infrastructure is an enabler that helps stimulate economic development and makes a location attractive to both the business sector and people. The subcommittee does not believe that job creation is the primary purpose of infrastructure, although that is an obvious spin-off. Infrastructure created only or primarily to create jobs will not be sustainable if there are no consumers for the infrastructure.

The subcommittee makes two recommendations. The first focuses on a regional approach to infrastructure development, and is aimed mainly at the second level infrastructure as defined earlier in the report. The second recommendation deals with a more provincial co-ordinated approach to infrastructure development.

1. **That the government promote and support a regional approach to infrastructure development.**

A number of infrastructure projects have the potential to be regional in nature, where two or more communities in a region work together to provide infrastructure for such services as water and sewage treatment, landfills, transportation, tourist and cultural facilities and others. Where projects can benefit several communities and thereby realize potential savings, the provincial government should reward projects through its funding mechanism, if the project is approached on a regional basis. Communities seeking funds for stand-alone projects should seek out nearby partners to ensure that regional co-operation and benefits are fully examined as part of the planning process.

A regional approach offers a number of advantages, including economies of scale, through which infrastructure can be provided at a lower cost to a larger number of people, and cost efficiencies in the operation of the infrastructure. Given the limited resources available to the province, it makes little fiscal or practical sense to fund separate community-specific projects if a regional approach is feasible.

Within a regional approach, municipal officials raised several concerns about funding programs, specifically the Canada Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program (CSIP) and the Canada Saskatchewan Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (CSMRIF). Concerns were expressed about the lack of a long term commitment to infrastructure funding, and about changes in programs when a government changes.

The subcommittee found that CSIP allowed an applicant to receive funding for up to five years in total, while the new CSMRIF may allow an applicant to receive funding for up to four years. With infrastructure programs where physical construction is involved, unlike various income support programs, once an agreement is signed there is a commitment and an understanding that little or no change can occur during the life of the agreement, even in the event of a change in government.

Concerns were also expressed that in many cases, communities did not have the necessary funding available to match the federal and provincial shares. It was suggested that a community should have the ability to bank grants for future use when the local share is available, or borrow against funding to allow the project to proceed early.[6] The subcommittee feels there is merit in this suggestion, and that it requires further examination and discussion to determine if this can be done while maintaining necessary financial accountability.

The subcommittee heard that the maximum percentage of financial support provided by provincial and federal governments for basic municipal infrastructure (earlier described as Level Two), should be consistent regardless of the size or type of municipality. Without the opportunity for detailed examination, the subcommittee feels that this suggestion requires further examination and discussion.

2. **That the provincial government, in conjunction with the private sector, develop a provincial economic development strategy, and a supportive rural infrastructure strategy, while ensuring a high level of co-ordination and co-operation among and within provincial government departments and crown corporations for the implementation of these strategies.**

During the course of the subcommittee's deliberations, it heard from many sources inside and outside government that there appears to be no discernable economic development strategy for the province and that there is no co-ordinated or central strategy for the provision of infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan. Generally, each department and crown corporation has its own business plan for building and renewing infrastructure.

With government, crowns and the private sector moving to a strategy-based approach to infrastructure provision, it becomes critical that there is an overall strategy to provide the broad goals and objectives that are now lacking and that there is co-ordination between departments and crown corporations responsible for infrastructure provision to meet the objectives of the strategy.

If economic development is going to occur, investors need to have certainty that the necessary infrastructure is going to be in place and at the right time.

While there are examples of the failure of co-ordination within government, the forestry industry expansion initiative provides an example of how entities within government and the private sector can work together successfully toward common goals. The broad provincial strategy of doubling the capacity of the forestry industry is meeting with success, providing evidence that this type of approach is worth emulating in other sectors of the rural economy.

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[6] Both CSIP and CSMRIF do not allow banking or borrowing money against the funding.

## VII BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As part of the subcommittee's work, a literature review was completed on the linkages between economic development and the provision of infrastructure. In addition, recent studies that examined rural development from an infrastructure perspective were reviewed.

The background information gives a detailed examination of the state of infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan. Information for this material came from both a review of the current literature and from our meetings with various stakeholders.

***The purpose of the background section is to provide information for those who are interested in a more in-depth look at infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan and a list of references on the various concepts of rural economic development in rural North America.***

***Some of the material might be construed as controversial. The subcommittee presents it for information only is it should not be seen as the subcommittee endorsing the findings or conclusions contained therein.***

***A report that describes the state of infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan can be found on the ACRE web site at www.agr.gov.sk.ca/acre/ or can be obtained by contacting the Rural Issues Office at 306-787-4572.***

***Following is the list of references on the various concepts of rural economic development in rural North America and other background information related to the subject of the subcommittee's work:***

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## APPENDIX A

**Stakeholders and Community Leaders Participating in the Subcommittee's Consultations:**

- SaskPower (John Wright, Ken Gullen, Kelly Staudt)
- SaskTel (Don Ching, Stacey Sandison, Daryl Silzer, Mike Anderson)
- SaskEnergy/TransGas (Dean Reeve, Fred Hill)
- SaskWater (Greg Argue, Rod Blackwell)
- Saskatchewan Department of Industry and Resources (Van Isman, Cam Pelzer)
- Saskatchewan Regional Colleges (Fay Myers, Neil Clarke, Bruce Probert)
- Saskatchewan Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs (Russ Krywulak, Doug Morcom, Ralph Leibel)
- Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation (Harvey Brooks, Barry Martin)
- Saskatchewan Health (Mike Shaw, Rod Wiley)
- Saskatchewan Learning (Nelson Wagner)
- Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (Neil Hardy, Bob Schultz, Ken Engel)
- Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (Phil DeVos, Allan Earle, Keith Schneider)
- Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (Guy Lonechild)
- Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce (Clay Dowling)
- Saskatchewan Arts Board (Jeremy Morgan)
- SaskTourism (Ian McGilp)
- West Central Municipal Governance Committee (Karen Martin, Daryl Senecal, Alma Dube, Ted Koester, Trent Michelman, Glenn Dow)
- West Central Water West Project (Brenda Burton)
- Saskatoon North Communities Association (Allan Earle, Wally Davis, Mike McLeod, Emery Ens, Ben Buller, Janet Peters, Nick Bakker and Ed Hobday)

**Participants at February 8, 2005, Roundtable**

- Karen Bonesky - General Manager, Entrepreneurial Centre, Swift Current
- Wally Lorenz - Mayor of Wilkie
- David Marit - Vice-President SARM, Fife Lake
- Walter Farquharson - former Mayor of Saltcoats
- John M. Berezowski - Reeve, RM of Cote
- Rod Haugerud - Mayor of Craik
- Brock Gillanders - Kyle
- Kim Gartner - Town Administrator, Macklin
- Jim Tucker - CEO of MidSask REDA/CFDC, Outlook
- Wayne Myron - Mayor of Ogema
- Linda Mcphee - Cumberland Regional College, Tisdale
- Doug Hay - Economic Development Officer for Town of Tisdale
- Warren Vandenameele - Councilor, Town of Langenburg

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